

**The Nineteenth Century Novel**  
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**Module No # 03**  
**Lecture No # 01B**  
**The Nineteenth Century Novel (Continued 2)**

Hello and welcome back. In this session we would continue with the major concerns of the 19th century novel. We will first look at Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and then we will move on to Jane Austen's works and look at some of the major concerns of Austen's fiction.

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## Charlotte Brontë

Currer Bell

1816-1855

Shirley (1849)

Villette (1853)

The Professor (1857)



Jane Eyre  
(1847)

Charlotte Brontë's pseudonym is Currer Bell, and she lived between 1816 and 1855, and Brontë is known for these fiction: *Jane Eyre* published in 1847, *Shirley* published in 1849, *Villette*, 1853 and *The Professor*, 1857.

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## Jane Eyre (1847)

- “Do you think, because I am poor, obscure, plain, and little, I am soulless and heartless?—You think wrong!...I am not talking to you through a medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh:—it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave, and we stood at God’s feet, equal—as we are!”

I would like to show you a very important excerpt from Jane Eyre which is there on the slide. These words are uttered by the central female character Jane Eyre to her lover, prospective lover Mr. Rochester, and there is a massive class divide between Jane Eyre who is just a simple governess without any property of course, and then between Rochester, Jane Eyre and Rochester.

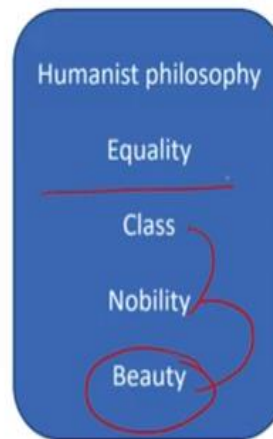
Rochester is the land lord. He is from the upper class and he has this big country estate, Thornfield Hall. So she is trying to shatter the massive class divide between Jane Eyre and her master, the Lord of Thornfield Hall. She says that, “Do you think because I am poor, obscure, plain and little, I am soulless and heartless? You think wrong. I am not talking to you through a medium of custom, conventionalities, nor even of mortal flesh: it is my spirit that addresses your spirit; just as if both had passed through the grave and we stood at God’s feet, equal as we are.”

So what she is trying to communicate here is the fact that just because I am playing does not mean that you can toy with my affections. I have as much right to certain emotions and feelings as anybody else. So within the realm of romance, everybody is equal. This is the philosophy that Jane Eyre proposes to Mr. Rochester.

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## Jane Eyre

- “cultural codes are stripped”
- the biblical analogy of Adam and Eve
- Outside Thornfield Hall
- “sheltered and more Eden-like” garden



Essentially what she is doing is that she is breaking the cultural codes that exist between Jane Eyre, a penniless governess, and the very wealthy Mr. Rochester who is from the nobility. So once again she also brings in the analogy of Adam and Eve to highlight the essential equality that exists between all men and women. And the setting for this scene is very interesting because it is not set within the Thornfield Hall, in the sense that the scene is not confined by four walls.

In fact, the scene is set in the gardens. And that brings in another comparison between the gardens outside Thornfield Hall and the Garden of Eden. So that analogy is again evoked by Charlotte Bronte in terms of this particular scene. If we go back to that exudes the humanist philosophy which suggests that all human beings are essentially equal. And then once again class principles are set aside within the domain of romance and courtship, and the nobility as equal as the middle classes or the working classes.

Beauty becomes again immaterial, especially in that earlier excerpt that we just had a look at, she says that just because I am poor, obscure and plain does not mean I do not have the right to fall in love with you. So beauty is again kind of marginalized here just as superior class positions are marginalized, so ultimately everybody is equal before this notion of romance, just as everybody equal in the eyes of God.

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## Jane Austen

- 1755-1817
- *Sense and Sensibility* (1811)
- *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)
- *Mansfield Park* (1814)
- *Emma* (1815)
- *Persuasion and*
- *Northanger Abbey*

1817



Now we move on to Jane Austen. Jane Austen's lifetime was between 1755 and 1817, and on the slide we have a set of novels, six in fact, which were published during her lifetime. In fact the last two, *Persuasion* and *Northanger Abbey* was published a few months after her death.

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## Jane Austen's novels

- Comedy
- Wit
- Satire
- "Social and geographical milieu...Hampshire, Bath and Dorset"

"within the realm of  
the possible"

Jane Austen was known for her comic spirit. In fact, if you want to fine tune that idea of comedy in her fiction, one would call it as witty. Her fiction is very witty and it is full of satire. In fact in her works she captures the social and geographical milieu of Hampshire, Bath and Dorset, and critics generally tend to describe her world as something which is possible. So whatever events and attitudes and behaviors that we come across in Austen's fiction is within the realm of the

possible. So in, with Jane Austen we tend to move into a world which is closer to the real world, the world outside the pages of her works.

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## Jane Austen's World



Now let's take a look at the kind of events that happen in a Jane Austen's universe. So usually we see preparations for a dance taking up much of the interest of the several female characters occupying the landscape of Austen, or it could be the preparations for an outing to the seaside, a picnic. These events make up the world of Jane Austen, and these events are as important to the people who walk in those worlds as other, you know, affairs such as politics and other social issues are important to Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell, so this is what happens in a Jane Austen's world.

And Jane Austen is more interested in a particular set of classes, particularly the world of the gentry, gentlemen farmers, and she is also interested in the middle classes especially the professional classes; so it is a small world that Austen is interested in, and she tries to make that world come alive. So she is working with a small world but then that world is extremely rich and nuanced and that is made available to her readership.

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## Walter Scott on Austen

- Austen's 'exquisite touch'
- Scott's 'Big Bow-Wow' approach
- 'commonplace things and characters interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment.'



This is what Walter Scott had to say about Austen's kind of writing. He said Austen had an exquisite touch, the way she wrote was exquisite, very elegant. In fact, he contrasted his own approach with Austen's approach. His approach is what he called the "Big Bow-Wow" approach and Austen's is quite the contrary, the opposite, where everything is very subtle, very elegant exquisite and intricate.

So we got to remember that Walter Scott wrote quite a lot of hugely successful historical fiction such as the Waverly novels, and he tells us that in Austen's fiction commonplace things and characters are interesting from the truth of the description and the sentiment. So even very ordinary events, very ordinary folks become alive and interesting and important because of the way Austen describes them, and the emotion with which she invests all these characters and events.

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## Love and Marriage in Austen's novels

“Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance” Charlotte

Lucas, *Pride and Prejudice*

“Remember that she is one of a large family; that as to fortune, it is a most eligible match” Jane Bennet, *Pride and Prejudice*

Marriage is a “manoeuvring business”

Mary Crawford, *Mansfield Park*

In terms of love and marriage in Austen's novels, we have a set of ideas that she weaves in many of her novels. I have listed a few quotations from some of her fictions, let us take them one by one. In *Pride and Prejudice* Charlotte Lucas, one of the minor characters and a friend of Elizabeth Bennet, a very clever woman. She says “Happiness in marriage is entirely a matter of chance.”

So one is not assured complete satisfaction and happiness in a marriage, in fact, it is purely by accident, happiness is purely by accident. And Jane Bennett from *Pride and Prejudice* says that, you know, commenting on Charlotte Lucas when she has agreed to marry Mr. Collins, she says that “Remember, she is one of a large family and that as to fortune it is a most eligible match.” So even though Mr. Collins is buffoon-like and not very ideal as a husband for Elizabeth Bennet, Jane assesses that he could, you know, make a perfect match for Charlotte Lucas who is one of many, you know, a large family.

So we get different perspectives as to what makes a marriage happen. Marriages are not made purely because the two are extremely in love with one another, marriages are made with an eye to the finances of the marrying parties and Mary Crawford is very precise and sharp when she says that marriage is a maneuvering business: there is a lot of machinations, there is a lot of strategizing that happens on the part of the courting couple to effect a marriage at the end of the day.

So marriages are not going to offer utter happiness for the couple, marriages are made for other than emotional reasons, and marriages take a lot of energy and effort into making them happen.

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What is the society think about in terms of marriage in the 19th century? The society thought that it was the religious duty of people to get married, and this religious duty was asserted through the conduct book literature that was extremely popular in that period. And in fact, marriage was a safe way out of the harsh economic reality for many of the young women, and especially in Austen's fiction we get that idea communicated quite clearly by Austen.

A good example is of course Elizabeth Bennett, the heroine of *Pride and Prejudice*, and how we can see that her mother Mrs. Bennett is extremely anxious to make sure that all her daughters are married off to wealthy grooms. So a young woman's value in the marriage market is something that keeps, you know, that kind of decides the kind of marriages that she will make. In fact, if you look at Elizabeth Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice*, she does not have a very high value in the marriage market primarily because she is not very wealthy.

And which is why any marriage that anybody with a reasonable amount of wealth would look very suitable to Mrs. Bennett's eyes.

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## Love in Austen's fiction

- Austen's heroines "marry for love"
- Catherine Morland, *Northanger Abbey*: 'to marry for money I think the wickedest thing in existence' (ch. 15).

Now let us take a look at the idea of love in Austen's fiction. Austen's heroine marry for love. Her minor characters such as Charlotte Lucas may marry for money, but Austen's heroine inevitably marry for love. We can say, we can see this idea endorsed through Catharine Morland in *Northanger Abbey* who states that "To marry for money I think the wickedest thing in existence." This remark that Catherine Morland makes is slightly exaggerated, and it does come from the mouth of a teenage heroine. Despite that fact, we need to remember that Austen prefers her heroines to marry for love, rather than any other consideration.

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## Love and Austen



- 'When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, they are pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point' (ch. 24)

Now let us take a look at how the idea of love changes between the 18th century and the 19th century in relation to the other figures who have a say in that relationship. In the 18th century

fathers tried to control the marriages. They decide whom their words are going to marry. In fact there is radical change in Austen's fiction, in the early 19th century fiction, in that Austen's narratives do take a note of family expectations when it comes to the romantic affairs of the central characters.

However at the end of the novel, at the end of the romantic narrative, the two courting, you know, partners do marry for love and such a marriages may or may not be with the acceptance of the family. And in this regard we can look at *Persuasion*, where Anne Elliot ultimately marries a man whom her family does not really agree as a suitable partner for Anne Elliot.

“When any two young people take it into their heads to marry, their pretty sure by perseverance to carry their point.” This excerpt is taken from *Persuasion*, and this is the comment of the ironic third person narrator, and this comment comes very late in the novel when Anne and Wentworth do decide for the second time to get married, and they are at a point where they are comfortable enough financially to disregard the opinions of anybody, be it family or friends. And that that is why the ironic third person narrator makes such a comment. She says that when two people make up their minds they do go ahead with their decision.

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## Youth and Marriage

- Lydia Bennet marries at 16
- Catherine Morland engaged at 17
- Marianne and Elinor get engaged in their teens
- “15 and 17” girls are “out” : courted

Now let us take a look at the age at which marriages happen in Austen's fiction. Lydia Bennett in *Pride and Prejudice* marries at 16, a very very young age by today's standards; and Catherine Morland who made that exaggerated claim that people who marry for anything but love are

wicked, she gets engaged at 17. Marianne and Elinor from *Sense and Sensibility* get engaged in their teens, very early age, and in Austen's fiction girls come out, that is, they are ready to be courted by eligible bachelors when they are about 15, 16 or 17 years of age.

So they are introduced quite early into the society so that they get to meet young men, suitable young men, and they form relationships which could end in ideal marriages.

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## Proposal

- Courtship as "a semi-public process"
- The couple rarely allowed privacy
- Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey*: 'man has the advantage of choice, woman only the power of refusal' (ch. 10).

So how does this courtship business take place in the society? Courtship is seen as a semi-public process; it is not a private affair. The couple are rarely allowed privacy, they are not allowed to remain on their own without a third person being present. There is usually a chaperone who is a family member or a friend present when the two are courting. Henry Tilney in *Northanger Abbey* says that, "A man has the advantage of choice, the women only the power of refusal." The women can only say no, and she cannot propose to marry somebody.

So we can see a very interesting balance in power relation between the male and the female with regard to courtship and marriage.

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# Marriage

- “Apply” for permission to the father
- Marriage is almost “irreversible”
- Divorce possible in only “extreme circumstances”
- Mr Rushworth in *Mansfield Park* gets a divorce

Once the couple decides to get married, they have to seek the permission of the father. And once the marriage is effected, once the marriage takes place, it is almost irreversible; it cannot be broken. Divorce is possible only in extreme circumstances such as cruelty, extreme cruelty or adultery within the relationship. In fact we see one such example in Austen’s fiction where Mr. Rushworth in *Mansfield Park* gets a divorce because of the adultery of the wife.

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# Pride and Prejudice

- “My dearest sister, now be serious. I want to talk very seriously. Let me know every thing that I am to know, without delay. Will you tell me how long you have loved him?”
- “It has been coming on so gradually, that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.”

House + environs      gardens

Now I want to look at some of the elements which effect romance to happen in the first place. So what are the key elements, or the characteristics, or the features in a man or women which is very attractive to the other sex. And in *Pride and Prejudice*, once the novel is nearing conclusion, we

have Jane Bennett, the sister of Elizabeth Bennett the heroine, asking this interesting question about what in the first place made Elizabeth Bennett fall in love with Mr. Darcy.

So this is the conversation between the two sisters Jane and Elizabeth Bennett. Jane asks “My dear sister, now be serious. I want to talk very seriously. Let me know everything I am to know without delay. Will you tell me how long have you loved him?” Him being Darcy. And Elizabeth Bennett replies, “It has been coming on so gradually that I hardly know when it began. But I believe I must date it from my first seeing his beautiful grounds at Pemberley.” This last phrase and Elizabeth's response is interesting for analysis, because she says she has been attracted by the gardens of Pemberley and if you go back to the except that I discussed from Jane Eyre, that conversation between Jane Eyre and Mr. Rochester also takes place in a garden, an Eden-like garden. So in Pride and Prejudice Elizabeth Bennett says that I became so enchanted by the beautifully manicured, beautifully arranged gardens in Pemberley that I fell in love with the master too.

The house and its environs, the house and its environs become very interesting to the female character. So it becomes one of the advantages for the male to have a extensive property which he could use to attract his partner in the 19th century.

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## Pride and Prejudice

- Estate house of Pemberley
- “She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration; and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!”

visitors

Symbolic tour of Darcy's  
mind and manners

Now, the estate house of Pemberley is a catalyst almost in the novel. It does play a part in kind of directing the courtship trajectory, the courtship path between Elizabeth Bennett and Mr. Darcy.

“She had never seen a place for which nature had done more or when natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste. They were all of them warm in their admiration and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something.”

So this excerpt is taken from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, and this is the moment when Elizabeth realizes the kind of principles which are in Mr. Darcy, and she thinks about all these notions as she is going through the house looking at them looking at the gardens from outside the windows, and she realizes something very interesting, and she thinks that nature has done more, nature itself has been very very generous to Mr. Darcy. And she also realizes that Mr. Darcy has also intervened only a little. He does not intervene in the way nature has arranged her beauties, which is why she says natural beauty had been so little counteracted, it has not been interfered with by an awkward taste.

Mr. Darcy did not have awkward taste. So all these attributes of the male protagonist can be seen through the way he has intervened or not intervened in the arrangement of nature outside his home, big home by the way. So they were all warm in the admiration, the visitors, they being the visitors. Elizabeth Bennett is visiting this country estate house with her friends the Gardeners, and the housekeeper lets them take a look at the house; the housekeeper of Mr. Darcy.

And now she realizes that you know to have been the mistress of Pemberley might have been something. It would have been grand to be the mistress of the Pemberley. At this point we know that Elizabeth Bennett had earlier rejected the proposal of Darcy. So, a tour of the house becomes a symbolic tour of Darcy's mind and manners, and that tour is important in changing Elizabeth's attitude towards Mr. Darcy. A change that will result in her accepting Mr. Darcy when he proposes the second time around.

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- Significant catalyst in her change of heart towards Darcy

- The tour of Pemberley and its environs

So I want to emphasize the point that the house becomes a significant catalyst in her change of heart towards Darcy. That visit is crucial in effecting that change and that visit take place at roughly the midpoint of the narrative. And the tour of Pemberley and its environs therefore becomes the crucial plot event in *Pride and Prejudice*.

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## Darcy

- The Housekeeper's testimony
- "power of doing what he likes"
- No "awkward" or "artificial" embellishment of Nature around his home
- Taste "neither gaudy and uselessly fine"

"What praise is more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant?"

In terms of Darcy's quality of mind we get to see that the housekeeper's testimony becomes crucial. In fact, you know, the narrative tells us what praise more valuable than the praise of an intelligent servant, and the narrative kind of channels Elizabeth Bennett's thoughts here. So the praise of a servant or the figure who is beneath Mr. Darcy in terms of class is important because

only those who are below can rightly judge the real qualities of a man like Darcy the master of the household.

In fact, the housekeeper tells Bennett that Darcy has the power of doing what he likes, in fact that you know, power that is vested in Darcy becomes quite clear. He can do what whatever he wants but then he does not use that power willy-nilly, he does not behave in an autocratic way, in fact the housekeeper is full of praise for him. All these, you know, realizations that Darcy refuses to misuse his power, that Darcy has been a very kind master, and that Darcy is a very good brother, all these information are fed to Elizabeth Bennett through the house keeper.

And once again there is no awkward and artificial embellishment of nature around his home. Nature is left pristine without Darcy's decision to change it, and in fact the house is tastefully furnished, the house of Pemberley is tastefully furnished. It is neither gaudy, neither too ornamental or uselessly fine, it has a practical side which Elizabeth admires. So once again the house and its setting, and the way the people within the house are treated by the master of the house becomes important in assessing the quality of the man Elizabeth Bennett is interested in.

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## Pemberley

- Admirable social and domestic practices
- Revealed through the home
- Key Narrative Event
- Pamela Regis "Recognition"

So Pemberley has a lot of admirable social and domestic practices, and these domestic and social practices become clear only when the heroine is within that home. The home of the hero, the home of the man she is in love with, you know, she will realize she is in love with him only later and the character of the man becomes revealed through the home, therefore the home becomes a



key narrative element and the tour of the home becomes a key narrative event. And this event which changes the heart of the heroine is what I would call recognition on the part of this female character, and I take this word recognition from the critic Pamela Regis.

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Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* (2003)

- "Recognition" in a courtship narrative removes a key "barrier" (that is the reasons that this heroine and hero cannot marry.)
- "new information" that overcomes a barrier

So let us see what it is. According to Pamela Regis in her book *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* published in 2003, recognition in a courtship narrative removes a key barrier, some kind of hurdle, a hurdle that is the reason that this heroine and hero cannot marry. So once the hero or the heroine recognizes something to be true, that recognition would remove the barrier that prevents him or her from marrying the partner.

So this recognition could be new information that overcomes a barrier. So what is the new information that we have in *Pride and Prejudice* which changes the heart of Elizabeth Bennett, and that is of course as I have discussed so far the tour of the Pemberley house which tells us something interesting and new and about the about the master of the house. If she comes to know he is generous, he is very elegant, he is very peaceful, he does not intervene, he does not have uselessly fine furniture.

So all these aspects that she gleans about the master kind of changes her attitude and removes the barrier that she has had so far in terms of Darcy.

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## Aristotle's *Poetics* (384-322 B.C.E)

- "Recognition" as a narrative principle
- "a change from ignorance to knowledge, disclosing either a close relationship or enmity, on the part of people marked out for good or bad fortune"

Pamela Regis in fact picks up on the concept of recognition as a narrative element from Aristotle's *Poetics* published 384 to 322 BCE, and what is recognition according to Aristotle, it is a change from ignorance to knowledge disclosing either a close relationship or enmity on the part of people marked out for good or bad fortune. So recognition could be kind of a knowledge that will result in relations being forged or broken, you know, friendship being formed or enmity being formed on the part of the people who are chosen to be narrated in that work or art, work of fiction.

So that is what recognition is according to Aristotle. Thank you for watching and I will continue in the next session.